



Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

*Councilor David A. Murphy, Chair
Councilor Maureen T. Carney
Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge
(Vacant)*

**City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street
Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building
Northampton, MA**

Meeting Date: May 19, 2016

MEETING MINUTES

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 8:54 p.m. Councilor Murphy called the meeting to order.
2. **Roll Call:** Committee members present were: Councilors Murphy, Carney and LaBarge. Also present from the City Council were: Councilors Dwight, Klein, Bidwell, O'Donnell and Sciarra.
3. **Approval Of Minutes From The Previous Meeting:** No meeting minutes were approved.
4. **Financial Orders:**

16.081 To appropriate \$39,353.78 For Related Infrastructure Upgrades Relative to the Replacement of The City's VOIP System

Councilor LaBarge moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

This is a project that is defined in the Capital Plan. The money that is discussed in this order is a fourth quarter payment that just arrived from Comcast that will be credited to the specified INET account. The plan is to quickly appropriate the money to the defined project. Mayor Narkewicz explained that this is the final payment from Comcast under the "old" contract.

16.082 Financial Order To Authorize Look Park To Apply For A PARC Grant And Authorize Related Borrowing

Councilor LaBarge moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

This is similar to orders that have been brought forward to the City Council for other PARC Grant Program projects. Mayor Narkewicz explained that the City does not intend to pursue borrowing for the project; however, borrowing authorization does score addition points during the grant application process. Shawn Porter, the Executive Director of Look Park was on hand to discuss the project.

Councilor LaBarge moved to recognize Director Porter; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

Director Porter explained that any monies received as part of the grant will go directly to the City. The City would then be responsible for issuing direct payments to vendors. The Park intends to replace the bathrooms in the Westwoods area, the Dow Pavilion area. When they were originally built (around 1940), they were not quite up to current code requirements—this grant will provide the necessary money to make the bathrooms ADA compliant, electrically more efficient, and employ water conservation methods.

The grant funds will also be used to replace the water spray park that is now over twenty years old.

The estimated cost for the complete project is \$656,000; the grant will provide for \$400,000 worth of renovations.

While not related to the PARC grant financial order, Director Porter also mentioned that the Park is looking to replace the Look Park Train Engine that is now over thirty years old. This age is roughly equivalent to about 400,000 miles. A new CP Huntington train is expected in late June of this year and park visitors will enjoy an updated color palate.

Financial Orders Regarding Community Preservation Committee Recommendations For Funding

16.083 Stained Glass Window Restoration, First Churches of Northampton: \$213,000

Councilor Carney moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor LaBarge seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 2 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstention (Councilor Murphy), 1 Vacant.

First Churches submitted an application to fund restoration efforts for many windows inside the Church. Due to the overwhelming request for CPA funds for various projects, this project will only be partially funded through the CPA grant application process. CPA is recommending funding for two of the windows: The Tiffany River of Life window (this window faces Center Street) and the Rose window (this window faces Main Street).

Councilor Klein asked about using CPA funds to support places of worship, and whether there were any legal implications relating to the City donating money to a church. Ms. LaValley states that this is not the first time that CPA funds would be used to support restoration projects for churches. There is clear case law that addresses this issue in favor of using CPA money to support restoration projects for this type of historical building. The Committee also felt that First Churches provides many valuable resources that benefit the community as a whole.

Councilor O'Donnell asked whether there was a preservation restriction on the window. Ms. LaValley stated that the restriction is on the Church as a whole and this includes the window. Mass Historic has also contributed funds to the preservation of First Churches, specifically for roof repairs. A preservation restriction was required at that time. If the preservation restriction was not in place, the CPC would have required one be established. Because of the restriction, the window must remain in Northampton, and the Church will be required to maintain it.

Councilor Dwight has noted that the Church has struggled to finance the preservation of the window. First Churches does provide a community space for meetings and other gatherings without any discussion of religion. It is an iconic building, not only for historic value that it has, but also for the types

of programming it offers to the community at large. Many other service organizations are assisted by the Church. The large window alone is valued at approximately \$750,000.

Councilor Sciarra pointed out that the preservation restriction also includes specific language regarding what the defined purpose of the building can be. There is real urgency in restoring the window.

Councilor LaBarge noted that the Council previously approved CPA funds for other restoration projects. Ms. LaValley noted that the committee made it clear to the Church that CPA funds would not be available to restore the smaller windows; as a result, the Church will be required to seek alternate funding sources.

16.084 Saw Mill Hills Open Space Acquisition, Northampton Conservation Commission: \$72,000

Councilor LaBarge moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

Ms. LaValley reported that Planning and Sustainability Director Wayne Feiden came forward with an order at the last Finance meeting that discusses a portion of the funds need to acquire the land specified as part of an overall acquisition plan; the portion funded by CPA funds contains an abundance of wildlife that are important to protect.

Councilor Carney commented that the Saw Mill area provides a great resource as a trail network; anything that can be done to improve or enhance the property will serve the citizens of Northampton very well.

Councilor LaBarge remarked that the area is very beautiful and supports preserving the property.

16.085 Historic Scenic Curtain Restoration, Academy of Music: \$44,785

Councilor Carney moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor LaBarge seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

The curtain in question was found stapled to the main stage curtain. It depicts Paradise Pond and the former host shop that burned down about one hundred years ago. There are some newspaper articles in which the curtain is featured.

16.086 Supportive Housing for Homeless Youth, Friends of Hampshire County Homeless Individuals: \$275,000

Councilor LaBarge moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

There is no existing resource like this in the area. Youth that transition beyond foster care or other programs have a very high risk of becoming homeless and staying homeless. This project will help address that gap. The exact location is not yet determined, however, the funding will remain the same regardless of the location.

16.087 Conservation Fund, Northampton Conservation Commission: \$30,000

Councilor LaBarge moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

These funds will be used to support quick turn-around relating to land acquisition. The funds may be used for title searches, surveys, environmental assessments, or any other work required when purchasing property.

Councilor LaBarge noted that the Commission has requested money for such purposes in the past. She supports the order.

16.088 Fitzgerald Lake Invasive Plant Control, Broad Brook Coalition \$12,800

Councilor LaBarge moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

This project will allow Broad Brook Coalition to continue its work to remove invasive species in the Fitzgerald Lake conservation area. These species were identified by Laurie Sanders, local naturalist and writer, as something that was a real threat to the habitat located in this area.

16.089 Shepherd Barn Dendrochronology Study, Historic Northampton: \$2,300

Councilor LaBarge moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

Historic Northampton submitted an application for the complete renovation of the barn, but due to the tight funding round and taking into consideration their proposed construction schedule which shows no construction this year, they reduced their funding request to the amount necessary to determine the age of the wood used in barn construction. This important step is necessary before full restoration can be done.

16.090 Pulaski Park Renovation and Expansion, Northampton Department of Public Works: \$805,400

Councilor Carney moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor LaBarge seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

This phase will allow renovation of the overlook portion of the park and will create additional parking spaces in an area of the hill that is completely unusable today. The project will also provide access to the bottom of the hill.

Councilor Dwight points out that the project will turn a current cliff into ADA compliant access to the bottom of the hill. The way will provide for foot traffic and bicycle traffic as well.

Councilor Bidwell noted that at the recent forum held by the Committee on Community Resources, a recurring theme that he took away was that downtown can be more successful by keeping it vibrant with events and activities that draw people to Northampton. He believes the park renovations will create such a space.

Councilor Sciarra attended the event where the design of Pulaski Park was unveiled. Now that the park renovations are more visible, there is excitement about the potential that the park will offer.

Councilor LaBarge asked about a time capsule that was placed in Pulaski Park. Mayor Narkewicz reports that the time capsule was placed there in 1976 and it has not been disturbed. There will be a modification to install a plaque showing where the time capsule is located. Regarding the planned Grand Opening, the Mayor is anticipating an even in June.

16.091 Financial Order To Allow The City's Tree Warden To Accept Gifts Of \$25,000 Or Less

Councilor Carney moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor LaBarge seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

Mayor Narkewicz stated that gifts of trees are sometimes given from local nurseries or from developers. This order will allow the Tree Warden to accept the gifts of \$25,000 or less without the requirement of coming before City Council for approval.

16.092 Order To Rescind TIF Previously Granted To Grantham Group

Councilor LaBarge moved to send the order forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

This is a paperwork requirement that the State is insisting upon. When the Christopher Heights project was first proposed, a TIF was requested by the developer, in addition to CPA funds. The Dept. of Housing and Community Development did not agree to two pronged funding plan so the TIF was never executed. Instead, funding was provided totally in CPA format. DHP approved the low income housing as a result of the funding restructuring. Mayor Narkewicz requested two readings on this order.

New Business: None

Adjourn: At 9:44 p.m. Councilor LaBarge moved to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Vacant.

Prepared by:

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